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THE ETHNOLOGICAL AND LINGUISTIC POSITION OF THE TACANA INDIANS OF BOLIVIA

By RUDOLPH SCHULLER

AS I HAVE stated elsewhere¹ far northwestern Bolivia is, ethnologically speaking, one of the most interesting sections of South America, yet no corner of that continent is so little known as the regions north of the river Tuiche. Great confusion exists as to the linguistic and ethnological affinity of the aboriginal tribes inhabiting the territories referred to. Of course, it would be impossible, within the limits of a brief paper, to discuss the different classifications which have heretofore been proposed by other American ethnologists.

The fishing and hunting tribes of the "montaña" of Bolivia and Peru have never been treated as a whole. We know little as to their myths, legends, and social organization. In most of the works which refer to these Indians, there are to be found very meagre data respecting the physical habitus of the aborigines, the manner in which they built their dwellings, their industries, the customs observed in the initiation ceremonies, their marriage customs, their music and dances, their religious belief and ceremonies, their mortuary rites, etc. And in addition to this, the literature dealing with these matters, generally, is widely scattered, and very often difficult of access.

With respect to the languages, we possess several vocabularies with short grammatical sketches of the Tacana proper and the Cavineña dialect. Texts have never been gathered. Therefore the linguistic material utilized in this paper must necessarily be limited in extent. In writing this article, I have aimed at presenting, within a moderate compass, a clear picture

¹ Moseteno Vocabulary and Treatises, Evanston and Chicago, 1917, p. xxiv.

of the ethnological and linguistic position of the Tacana speaking tribes.

To the branch which I here propose to name the "Tacana Linguistic Group," belong the following tribes, but most of those belonging to the Tacana group proper are now extinct.

*Pamaino ²	*Tšiliuva ³
*Aguatšile ²	Tacana proper
*Utšupiamona ³	Cavina or Cavineña ⁶
*Pasaramona ³	Araona ⁶
*Saparuna ²	Toromona ⁶
*Huawayana ²	Maropa ⁶
*Marcani ⁴	Sapibocona ⁷
*Guariza ⁵	

These tribes were, and some of them still continue to be, the lords of the virgin forest regions situated between the lower eastern slopes of the Andes and the River Beni, more or less between 12° and 15° south latitude, and 68° and 71° longitude west of Greenwich. In the north, they reached as far as the territories occupied by Pano-Aruác speaking tribes. East of them are to be found the Moxo. The tribe called Maropa, or Marupa,⁸ formerly lived in and near the Mission de los Reyes, on the right bank of the Beni. West of the Tacana are the Kétšua, the Aymará, and the Lapatšu of Apolobamba.⁹ The

² Indians who fought with slings and metal axes, mentioned in the "Jornada del capitán Juan Alvarez Maldonado (1567-1569)", publicada por Luis Ulloa, Sevilla, 1899; reprinted in Dr. V. M. Maúrtua's "Alegato Peruano," tomo viii. Chunchos; Madrid—Barcelona, 1906. The author of this all-important narrative must have been the pilot of Maldonado's expedition.

³ "Carta de los misioneros fray Juan Muñóz, fray Juan de Ortega, etc., al Obispo del Cuzco"; Maúrtua, op. cit., pp. 96-103.

⁴ *Relacion Histórica de las Misiones Franciscanas de Apolobamba*, por otro nombre Frontera de Caupolicán; La Paz, 1903, pp. 56-58; cf. Rivet, "La Lengua Lapaçu," p. 513, note 2.

⁵ The Lord's Prayer in Guariza was published by Professor E. Tezza in his "Saggi Inediti di Lingue Americane," *Appunti Bibliografiche; Annali della Università Toscana*, x, pt. 1, Scienze Nool; Pisa, 1868.

⁶ Likewise mentioned in the above quoted narrative.

⁷ See my *Moseteno Vocabulary*, p. xcii.

⁸ "Then came the Marupas, who occupied the junction between the Beni and Madre de Dios," says the anonymous author of the narrative.

⁹ According to Créqui-Montfort—Rivet they belong to the Aruác linguistic family; cf. op. cit., p. 520.

Sapibocona attached to the mission of the Moxo were formerly the most eastern branch of the Tacana group.

Father Cardús¹⁰ describes the Tacana of Tšïama as docile and agricultural. The Cavina, however, are considered by the same author as very averse to any kind of manual labor and personal subjection. These Indians work, D'Orbigny remarks, only in order to obtain food and European trifles, which they use for adornments. They are of darker complexion than the Moseteno-Tšumano, yet their color is almost white in comparison to that of the Kétšua and Aymará. The Tacana are as tall as the Moseteno and Xuracaré. The average height of the men is from 163 to 165 centimeters. There are many among them who have the body covered with large patches almost white, probably the same cutaneous disease which affects the Moseteno.¹¹ They do not differ widely from the latter. The Tacana are, however, of less feminine appearance. The face is regular and cheerful. The nose is short and somewhat flat. They are of relatively strong build, robust in shoulders, and well chested. The eyes are horizontal and expressive, the hair long and black.

It is the man who has to erect the hut for the family. The savage Tacana, both men and women, go entirely naked; the Araona women wear little aprons made from the bark of the Biboci tree and at times woven from cotton.

As to the Araona, Father Nicolás Armentia furnishes the following data. They are tall, strong, agile, and jolly, but extremely lazy. Some of them have beards. He observed also bald-headed men among them, a fact very seldom noted among South American Indians. They perform some agricultural work, but their primary occupation is the collection of forest produce. Their food consists chiefly of game, fish, and fruits, the last being collected by the women in the forest. They are skilful fishers and use quadrangular weirs made from palm leaves. Only primitive rafts are used as means of transportation. They build large houses, each of them occupied by twenty or more

¹⁰ Las Misiones Franciscanas, pp. 168, 169; see also *L'homme Américain*, 1, pp. 377-378, and Lafone Quevedo, Tacana, p. 6.

¹¹ Moseteno Vocabulary, pp. xxii-xxiii.

families, but each family with a fireplace of its own. They sleep in conical shelters, in order to protect themselves from the ferocious attacks of the zancudos.

Both Araona and Cavineña engage in agricultural work. The men cut down trees and bushes, but they do not take part in sowing, transplanting, harvesting, and so on. This and every other kind of agricultural labor is done by the women who also gather fuel, cook, and weave clothing.

The caciques of the Araona are polygamous; the other men of the tribe also have as many wives as they can buy or capture. These Indians generally have no great regard for the marital tie, and interchange of women occurs frequently. Marriage ceremonies are unknown to them. The father of the girl whom the man has selected is consulted, but the girls have no voice in the matter. The bride's price is an ax or two. In case of disapproval the girl is simply captured or carried off.

The weapons of these Indians are the bow and arrow. The latter are greater than those used by their Caripuna (Pano) neighbors. According to the above mentioned narrative of Alvarez Maldonado's journey down the upper Madre de Dios, the Pamaino fought with slings and metal axes.

The "almonds" of the *Bertholetia excelsa* are broken with small stone axes, which are fastened to the handles with very hard resin.

The chieftaincy is hereditary. The father is succeeded by his favorite son, who receives the title of Ecue,¹² and generally he is recognized by his kinsmen before the cacique's death.

A dead person is buried in his own hut, but funeral urns for the second burial have been used by both Araona and Toromona.¹³

From my sources of information, of course, it is very difficult to obtain a correct and clear idea as to the religious beliefs of the Tacana-speaking tribes.

Baba-Bu-Ada¹⁴ is regarded as the demi-urge and ruler of the universe. He seems identical with Vutana, "the wind," who

¹² Armentia, Tacana, p. 10, gives *Ecuai putsu*, which means "ruler-being."

¹³ Armentia, Cavineña, pp. 4-5.

¹⁴ *ala* means "consanguineous," cf. *ala-piisi*, Cavineña.

lives to the south.¹⁵ Buada's aid they beseech in all their enterprises. To their pantheon belong also a god of the sun, or the year, another of health, a third of the fire, and still others. The idols of these gods are kept in a house of worship, where are deposited also the ornaments and attire which the Indians don at their periodical religious feasts.

In an exploration made in 1887 in search of a route from the middle Madre de Dios to the river Aquire (Acre) Araona villages were reached. The men wore their hair long and plaited like the Chinese, and both sexes wore girdles and petticoats. The explorers, Colonel Labre and Mercier, report a rude form of government and worship. "Temples" with numerous idols of wood and stone were found, and the "priests" were in charge of all the religious ceremonies and duties. The idols were of three kinds. Those of the first class were a yard-high, cut from blocks of *tšonta* wood, carved with figures, and adorned with beautiful feathers. The second class called "the guard," were formed of ten lances of the same wood, two yards long, well-polished, and terminating at a point made of another piece of very fine wood. The third class of divinities consisted of many small stones, the origin of which could not be determined. The idols of the first-class were gods of the wind, the seasons, and the moon, and among them are many gods for the special protection of men. The small stones are intended to benefit agriculture—the maize, yucca, seeds, fruits and the ripening of harvests; but among them are the gods of rain, rivers, and lakes. There are also gods for fish and amphibious animals.

Women, because they are considered impure, are not allowed to take part in the worship or even to enter the temples. Armenia likewise states that the women are not allowed to see the idols and the attirements. Should a woman see them she would die, or at least become blind.¹⁶ The women, however, play small flutes made from bones during the performance of the dances.

Feasts are celebrated with dancing, as are also the seasons of planting.¹⁷ On these occasions the Araona garland themselves

¹⁵ Evidently a "creator" in the sense of Andrew Lang, *The Making of Religion*, 2nd ed. 1900, p. 193 ff.

with plumes. They play ball, and, having belted themselves with the bark of a tree, they receive the ball on the belly and with a strong movement cause it to rebound.

SUMMARY PRESENTATION OF THE ETHNOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL STATUS OF THE TACANA

Habitations Quadrangular houses, occupied often by twenty or more families.

Navigation Small rafts. These Indians are not very expert craftsmen.

Fishing Quadrangular weirs made from palm leaves.

Weapons Bow and arrow, the latter being characterized by pitch-feathering.¹⁸ Metal axes, slings, clubs, darts, and shields ornamented with feathers.¹⁹ Big knives, and daggers (?) made of *tšonta* wood, lances (?)

Dress and personal adornments The savage Toromona wore shirts made of cotton. The Araona women wore little aprons woven from the bark of a tree called *biboci*, and sometimes woven from cotton. The toucan (called by the Araona *parava*) feathers are kept in *tacuéra* (cane) tubes.²⁰ The Araona wear necklaces made of pierced quaburn (wild boar-javali teeth). Rows of seeds are also used. Bracelets and the like below and beneath the knees are used by the Tacana women.²¹

Industries Spoons made from *tšonta* (*Bactrix*) wood. Small stone axes fastened to the handle with resin. Fans made from palm leaves. Pots and jars of all sizes and shapes to hold water, and fermented drinks, to keep coca, etc. *Masa-mahi*, a kind of shirt, usually sleeveless and similar to the *cušma* of the Atsiri and the Amuéša Indians, are woven by the women.²² Yet, judging from the Araona name, it seems to me that those shirts are made rather from the prepared fibres of a certain *tšonta* palm

¹⁸ P. W. Schmidt, *Kulturkreise und Kulturschichten in Südamerika*, in *Z E*, 1913, p. 1036.

¹⁹ Mentioned by the anonymous author of the narrative.

²⁰ Armentia, *Cavineña*, p. 10.

²¹ Armentia, *D'Orbigny, Tacana*, p. 6.

²² Armentia, *Cavineña*, p. 11.

	called by the Araona <i>mahi</i> . ²³ From the same material seem to be made likewise the bags called <i>tsoro-mahi</i> ; cf. <i>tumahé, totahi-palm, Tacana</i> , p. 75: cf. Cardús, op. cit., p. 293.
Musical Instruments	Little flutes generally made of bones, with three hollows. ²⁴
Fire-making	The method of making fire by friction of wood on wood and thus igniting the ground-off particles (fire-drill) is in use among these Indians. ²⁵ According to Armentia, they are not very expert in fire-making by friction. ²⁶
Marriage	Either by purchase or by capture, according to circumstances.
Social Status	They are polygamous. General degradation of the women. Chieftaincy is hereditary. <i>Concentration of power</i> , the whole power being vested in the cacique who is an absolute despot and disposes arbitrarily of all tribesmen, their families and their property. They are reduced to a state not unlike slavery.
Religion and Ceremonies	Here we have an amalgamation of elements which belong to different cultural strata.
Disposal of the Dead	By direct burial. ²⁷ Though there are indications that seem to point towards indirect burial. ²⁸

Here we may summarize the process of the gradual amalgamation of those elements which constitute the intellectual (religious) and material culture of the Tacana tribes.

Primitive Culture ²⁹	The method of fire-making. Little skill in navigation.
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²³ Armentia, op. cit. p. 11, says, "woven from cotton."

²⁴ Op. cit., p. 13.

²⁵ Op. cit. p. 9.

²⁶ Generally they use the wood of the Jucaya, called by them *ediqui*; Tacana, p. 55 II.

²⁷ Armentia, op. cit., p. 13.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

²⁹ P. W. Schmidt, op. cit., p. 1022

	P. Schmidt	Graebner	} <u>Ankermann-Foy</u> Primitive culture
I. Exogamic-monogamous culture (pygmies and pygmoids)			
II. Exogamic, with equal rights for both man and wife		Primitive culture of Tasmania	

Culture: Exogamic-paternal organization.³⁰

The bark belt. It is unquestionably related to that used by the Jamamadi Indians hunting with blow-guns.³¹ This close-fitting gown enables them to blow more powerfully. The Araona evidently don their bark belt for similar reasons. To this culture belong likewise the daggers made from *tsonla* wood.³² The idols of the god of the tiger, of the wild boar, etc., are traces of totemism.

This cultural circle is the home of sorcery. The Araona were greatly given to the practice of magic arts.³³

Culture: Exogamic-maternal organization.³⁴

Necklaces made of perforated teeth of the wild boar. These teeth are closely related to the moon mythology. Here the moon is the ancestress (ancestor) of the tribe. The new moon is greeted by the Araona with shouts of joy. The worship of the moon is manifest.

Shield and sling are characteristic weapons of the motherright culture.³⁵

The small stone axes, however, may belong to a later period. The same may be said as to the flutes with three hollows.³⁶

cucu, *xuxu*, "uncle," brother of the mother, is a very important word in the languages of tribes with female descent.

Free-motherright Culture³⁷,

Several families inhabit the same house (communal houses). The dead buried in the house. After a certain time the bones are disinterred, especially the skull, and then buried again in large

³⁰ P. W. Schmidt, l. c., No. IV. Graebner's "West-Papuan culture," Ankermann's "East-African culture," Foy's "Totemic culture."

³¹ Wrestlers and carriers wore undoubtedly for the same reasons straps closely tied around the wrist.

³² The term *cuchillo*, knife, employed by Armentia is rather vague.

³³ "In religious matters," says Colonel Suárez when speaking of the Caripuna-Pano of the river Madeira, "they do not seem to be as idolatrous and superstitious as the Araonas."

³⁴ P. W. Schmidt, l. c., No. V. Graebner's "East-Papuan Culture," Ankermann's "West-African Culture," Foy's "Bow-Culture (Two class system)."

³⁵ Shield and sling may indicate also Andean influence; cf. P. W. Schmidt, op. cit., p. 1053.

³⁶ This kind of musical instrument seems to appear for the first time, however, in the exogamic-mother-right culture.

³⁷ P. W. Schmidt, l. c., No. IV (instead of VI). Graebner's "Melanesian Culture," Ankermann's "West African Culture," Foy's "Bow Culture."

Free-fatherright
Culture³⁹

earthen urns.³⁸ This method of burial is related to the head-trophy and the head-cult.

Fans made from palm leaves, Despotie government: tribesmen in slave-like condition. Absolute power of the chief or cacique. *Itseti Edutsi*⁴⁰ is the name of the god of the sun (Sun-cult).

Their rafts, as well as those used by the Moseteno, denote the influence of Andean culture. The metal axes of the Pamaino might have existed only in the minds of the Spanish adventurers. Shields and slings likewise show Andean influence.⁴¹ Thus *livi-livi* (reduplication of movement) "sling" (*honda*) is surely a borrowed word.⁴²

Pottery and the art of weaving were developed by them quite in accord with the above-mentioned cultural circles (*Kulturkreise*).

Baba-Bu-Ada is considered as the creator of heaven, the sun, the moon, and the stars. Whether he is the ancestor of the sun we do not know. He is the wind, and his residence is in the south. The feasts at the seasons of planting and harvesting are dedicated to him.

The masque dances are, undoubtedly, relics of a primitive secret society. The partial exclusion of the women shows how certain changes in the economic as well as in the political life of the tribe rendered obsolete the secrecy which during the period of matrilineal succession had been strictly observed in regard to those feasts from which the women had rigorously been excluded. The rise of secret societies is directly associated with the powerful economic position of the women during the period of matrilineal succession. These prerogatives, degrading as they were for the men, had to be counterbalanced, and, whenever possible, masculine authority over the women recovered.

³⁸ Armentia found funeral urns with bones, yet without the skull. The head of the dead had probably been kept separate.

³⁹ P. W. Schmidt, op. cit., No. VII. Graebner's and Foy's "Polynesian-Culture," Ankermann's "Sudan-Culture."

⁴⁰ Armentia, op. cit., p. 12.

⁴¹ P. W. Schmidt, op. cit., p. 1052 and p. 1053.

⁴² *Viu-viu*; see Cavineña.

To sum up: The Tacana group represents, from an ethnological point of view, an amalgamation of totemic and exogamic tribes with maternal descent, which also were influenced by their highly civilized Andean neighbors.⁴³ The anonymous author of the above quoted narrative with well-founded reason states, "All these provinces are inhabited by people clothed in cotton, and all having rites and ceremonies like those of the Yunga in Peru."

MEXICO CITY.

⁴³ Moseteno Vocabulary, p. xxiv, where I stated, although erroneously, "Tacana, Leco, Araona, etc., were not much influenced by the more highly developed culture of Peru and Bolivia." Recent inquiries, however, have enlarged my knowledge as to the cultural and linguistic relations that doubtless exist between the cis-Andean tribes and the high culture of Peru.